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LETTER DATED 3 AUGUST 1998 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 2 August 1998 from Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, concerning the hostile and unlawful act committed by Kuwait against Iraq when Kuwaiti coastguard forces detained two ships bound for Iraq with cargoes of foodstuffs.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex

Letter dated 2 August 1998 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

We should like to call your attention to the fact that Iraq, which is suffering under an unjust embargo that has now been maintained against it for eight years, continues to be the object of all manner of unlawful practices on the part of the Kuwaiti authorities. Kuwaiti coastguard forces have now stopped and detained two ships registered in the United Arab Emirates that were carrying foodstuffs for Iraq.

In its issue for Saturday, 11 July 1998, the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Anba' quotes a member of the coastguard as saying: "The interception of the two ships is in keeping with the customary measures taken to investigate ships bound for Iraq. Our objective is to apply the sanctions imposed on Iraq rigorously, and we stop ships inside Kuwaiti territorial waters and investigate them before they reach Iraq."

This action by the Kuwaiti coastguard has no legal basis and thus constitutes an unmitigated act of hostility that is incompatible with the Security Council resolutions that established the ceasefire following the 30-Power aggression launched by Coalition forces against Iraq in January 1991. Those resolutions did not, moreover, prohibit Iraq from obtaining food or other humanitarian requirements, and they did not authorize the Government of the Kuwait regime to intercept ships bound for Iraq with foodstuffs on board.

As it condemns this illegal and unwarranted conduct, the Government of Iraq calls upon the United Nations to put an end to unacceptable Kuwaiti practices whose only objective is to tighten the grip of the unjust embargo that is being maintained against the Iraqi people in violation of all humanitarian standards and values. It reserves its right to take action, at the appropriate time, to defend the rights and interests of the Iraqi people.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammed Said Al-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs of
the Republic of Iraq